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SALVAGE

ELIZABETH C. CARDOZO



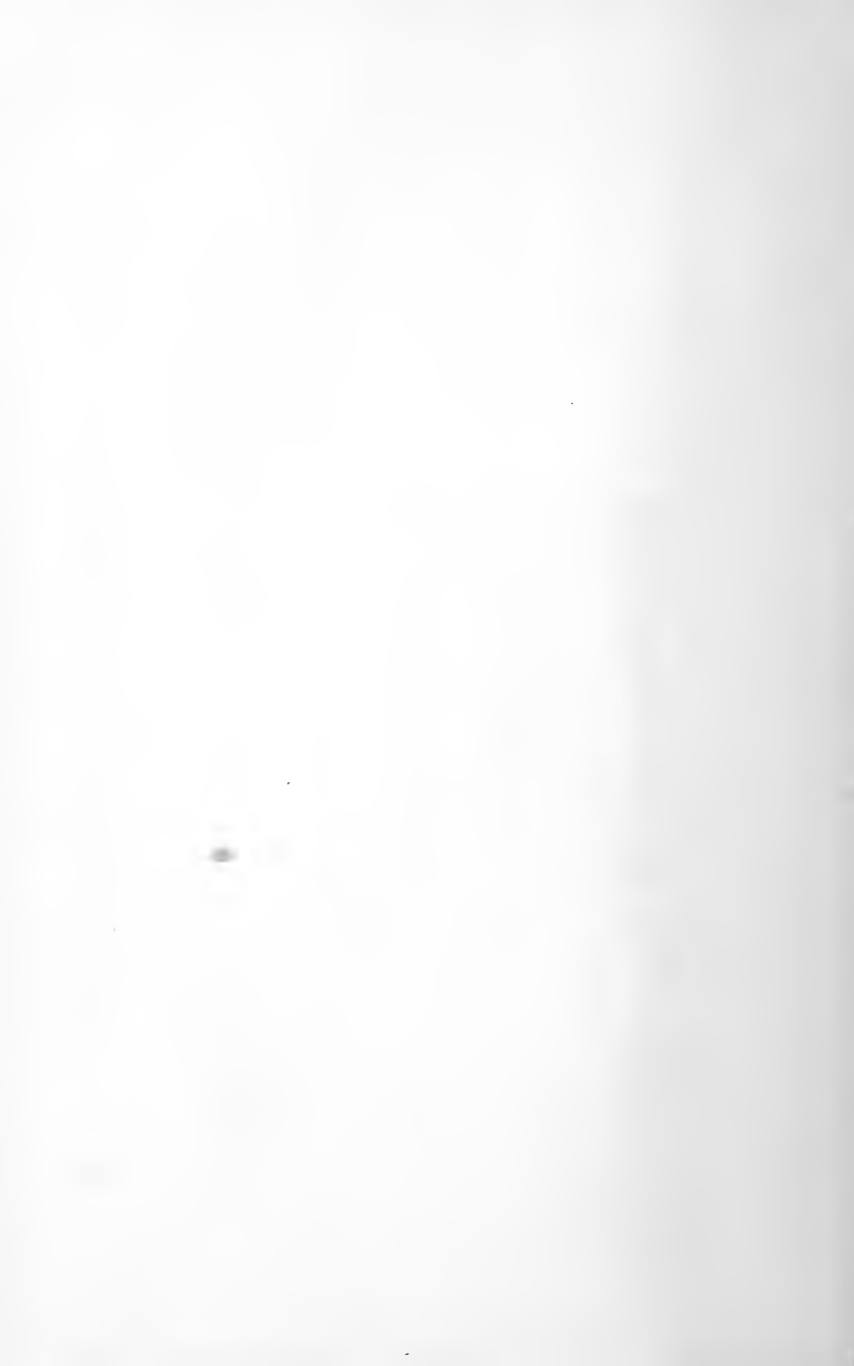
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SALVAGE

ELIZABETH C. CARDOZO

II



RICHARD G. BADGER

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TO MY COUSIN,
JOSEPHINE LAZARUS

My little book must go out into the world without the help you proffered; it must lack your guidance, your keen word of praise or blame.

Yet perhaps,—who knows?—my thought of love and gratitude may reach across to you today when I write your name in my book.



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SALVAGE: TO K. A. T.

Shipwreck! Along the shore,
As far as the eye can reach,
A lifetime's treasured store
Cast on the beach.

Look where the sated sea
Creeps to its rest again;
Shall there no salvage be
From so much pain?

Out of the wreckage and wrong
What shall I save in the end?—
The pain-born spirit of song,
And one true friend.

LOVE'S COURT

"To cast for love the crown of love away."

—A. C. SWINBURNE.

I stood before the Gate that leads to Love's Court, and clamored for entrance.

Then he that guards the Gate made question of me: What hast thou done that thou shouldst enter here? Art thou of Love's chosen?

I said: All my life I have dreamt of Love; I would be his faithful acolyte.

But he that guards the Door made answer: Thou canst not enter in.

So I wandered over the earth many days, and at last I found myself again at Love's Court, and again I clamored for entrance.

Then he that guards the Gate questioned me: What hast thou done?

And I said: I have loved, and I have kept love before me as a light to guide my steps.

But Love's Gate-Keeper answered: Thou canst not enter in.

And it was again many days before I came to Love's Court, but this time my hands were cut and bleeding and the iron had entered into my soul.

So when the Gate-Keeper questioned me, I showed my bruises. I have suffered, I said, I have gotten these for Love.

But the Gate-Keeper only smiled and shook his head.

Now, after a many days' wandering over the face of the earth, I found myself again, all unawares, at the Gate of the Court of Love.

And even before I spoke the Gate-Keeper questioned me. What hast thou done? he said.

I answered: Nay, this time I know that I may not enter in. For Love's sake I have renounced love.

But the Gate flew open.

LOVE'S EPIPHANY

Thus much the implacable face of life defies,
Thus much defies death's absolute decree,—
One hour that claims of fate immunity
By right divine of birth, not suppliant-wise,
But calm, triumphal, in compellant guise,
This one redress, this salvage falls to me,
This one hour saved of all eternity,
Spared of the sacrificial flames that rise.

We two within the cinctured silence there,
Looking on God's fair world with quickened
sight,
In that awed hush when souls meet face to face,
Through the heart's deep discernment were aware
Of rushing wings and sudden blinding light,
As of Love's visible presence in the place.

THE COMING OF LOVE

Into the mournful circle of my Woes
A stranger Presence stole, swift-footed, white,
Whose glorious advent cast a sheer affright
On that grim host, my Griefs; they straightway
rose,
And pallid, shrinking, torn by terror-throes,
Spake shudderingly: "Behold this radiance
bright,
This new strong Presence! Lo, in our despite,
An alien thing here in our concourse goes."

But Love drew near and spoke, and at his word
My smitten throng of sorrows raised their head,
As if in answer to a sign they knew.
Some secret bond of fellowship was stirred,
A strange, mysterious sympathy; Love said:
"Nay, fear me not, for I am one of you!"

LOVE'S GUERDON

Love saith: If thou wilt bring
The gracious tribute of a perfect faith,
Each secret thought, each consecrated thing,
If thou wilt bring, Love saith;

If thou wilt freely give
Thy life-work, life itself, if need should be,
Or what is more, for my sake dare to live,
My servant utterly;

If thou wilt bring, saith Love,
A single purpose, and a broken heart,
And set thy fealty to me above
Thy hopes, thy aims, thy art;

If thou wilt offer me
All thy life's hours and deem the tribute small,
Owning my absolute supremacy;
If thou wilt offer all,

Love saith; if thou wilt dwell
In the low places of the earth, content
To hearken to my voice half audible,
Nor give thy longing vent;

If this, and more than this,
Thou wilt endure for love of me, Love saith,
Hear thou thy lot, how very sweet it is,
The guerdon of thy faith.

I do adjudge thee fit
To bow in worship at my shrine, but I
Will turn my face, with gracious promise lit,
On them that pass me by.

Thou, all thy weary days,
Mayst gaze on me afar by night and morn,
But only they shall look upon my face
That laugh my name to scorn.

SORROW TRANSFORMED

Let us be friends, O Sorrow of my life,
Why should we not be friends?—
Thou that with artful turnings of thy knife
Hast served me friendship's ends;
Thou that hast torn me from the quiet place
Where pleasure held me fast;
Thou to whose force my every good I trace,—
Let us be friends at last.

Let us be friends; I would not we should part,
Thou source and soul of song;
I would not have thee other than thou art,
Love's foster-mother strong;
If thou shouldst leave me I should surely miss
Thine ever-watchful eyes;—
Alas, what mockery of fate is this,
That thou shouldst don Love's guise!

DIALOGUE

I said to Love: Why hast thou thus undone me?

Love said, dissembling: Nay, have I indeed done so?

I said: Henceforth I forbid thee my presence.

Love said: Thou shalt bear the memory of me to thy grave.

I said: Nay, now, I will not release thee; thou shalt be my servitor forever.

Love said: Art thou then stronger than I?

I said: Alas, no; thou hast proven thyself my master. Lead and I follow.

Love said: It shall be well with thee; have no fear. Thou shalt suffer, but have no fear. Thou shalt sorrow, but have no fear. Thou shalt die, but fear not.

Alas, Love, I said, and again, Ah, Love, alas.

Said Love: Fear not; I will abide with thee.

SPRING SONG

In the recurrent pauses of the night
Not all unmeet is pain,
But how shall I endure it when the light
Of morning comes again?

When the black clouds of winter hedge me
round,
Grief is no alien thing,
But how shall I support the sight and sound
And ardor of the spring!

BROTHERHOOD

The air is full of whirring wings,
Past ken of touch or sight,
And beautiful mysterious things
Call through the conscious night.

The mounting sap is in my blood,
I hear the growing grass;
All nature shapes me to her mood,
And greets me as I pass.

I read the rune of bud and leaf
And horny acorn cup;
Their joy, and their peculiar grief,—
Each yields the secret up.

Their hidden meaning plain I con,
And greet them brotherly . . .
Ah, not of choice this gift I won;
'Twas straitly laid on me.

Through days and nights of bitter woe,
At sorrow's furthest reach,
My sense grew quick in me; I know
The universal speech.

MOODS

Am I wholly glad today?—
Or is it that perfect pain,
In some unaccounted way
That our wits can never sound,
Running the cycle round,
Has grown half glad again?

Or who shall say to me
Why to-day my heart is sad?
Is it but truly this,
That the very top of bliss
Owns a strange affinity
With all woful things that be,
And we that are sad grow glad!

SUNRISE

Darkness, and yet but now there went
Across the dreaming land,
A hint of some divine event,
Portentous, close at hand.

The waiting silence grew intense,
As thrilled to passing wings;
I heard not; saw not, for my sense
Is gross with earthly things.

A prescience of the coming day
Stirs the tall waiting ships;
The old oak monarch seems to lay
A finger on his lips.

Some word attuned beyond my ear
Is presaged by the hour;
My sense is holden, but 'tis clear
To every tree and flower.

A throng of night-dreams, wan and spent,
One moment round me pressed . . .
See, now, in His high firmament,
Godhead made manifest.

SPRING MOOD

The miracle of life renewed
Upon the old decay,
In wondrous clear similitude
Is in the fields today.

The earth's expectant and athrill,
A palpitant live thing;
While joyously, with chirp and trill,
The birds profess the spring.

And underneath the bursting sod
The new glad forms are rife,
Till that recurrent word of God
Shall summon them to life.

All things, all creatures, seem to share
The deep divine unrest . . .
The memory of an old despair
Is quick within my breast.

REPENTANCE

In the heart of the silent night, and in the glare of the lurid day, my Sin was beside me. As I moved among my fellows, they saw the shadow of his black wings upon me, and they held themselves aloof.

Accursed, they cried, Unclean!

Wherefore I went my way silently, with my Sin for my only companion.

But in the heart of the black night I faced him, and let my glance meet his. And we understood one another.

Then it befell after many days, and by reason of much suffering, that there came a change. For behold, this black Sin that towered above me, grew paler and paler of aspect, until at last there shone out a white light from within that transformed him.

Nevertheless as I move among my fellows, they cry: Accursed, unclean! For with a curious blindness they still see him only as he once was, and they perceive not that through long vigils, and because of many tears, he has acquired a strange glory.

But I only smile, and look at my transfigured companion, and we go our solitary way.

THE SWAN-WIFE

(CLARE COAST, IRELAND.)

The house of Conon, rough, but showing signs of comfort and even of adornment; in short, an expression of the man himself, a strange mixture of fineness and brutality.

Ingrid, his wife, has just put the baby in his crib, and is crooning over him, while two little girls in night-dresses, nestle sleepily against her. She is fair, with another fairness than that of the women of Ireland.

Ingrid sings

The wind is calling, calling, round Aran in the sea;
The birds fly now to the north,—and the wind
cries ceaselessly;—
O bitter cold wind in my heart, will you never let
me be?

The wind is blowing, blowing,—I feel in my
heart its blast,—
Out of the far-off isles, out of the far-off past;—
Silence, O wind, and peace! I must come to
your arms at last.

Muireall

Mother, I heard the women talk today;
'Tis what they said (and no way true at all!)
That some bright morning we should wake to find
Your arm-chair empty, and should seek and seek,
But never find you. Say it is not so,
Dear mother, say it was a lie they spoke.

Ingrid

Nay, little one, at any eve or morn
Which of us all may say he shall be here?
Has not the mistress taught you so at school?

Elie, in a baby lisp
Mamäeen, say that you will never go,
Or we shall cry and cry.

Muireall
Oh, yes, at school
They teach us as you say, but 'twas not that
Old Granny Murphy whispered, no, not that.

Ingrid, scornfully
And what said Goodwife Murphy, I would hear!

Muireall
A many, many tales. But once she thought
I was not heeding, and she spoke of things
So strange I shivered after in my bed;—
Of little children that the fairies stole;
Of *duinshee* music; and at last—at last—

Ingrid, softly
Ay, little one, what was't she said at last?

Muireall
A dreadful story how a sober man,
With no companion but his dog and gun,
Went to the woods a-hunting; and he saw
A flock of great white swans and shot at them,
So one fell wounded; and it cried to him
With human sobbing, and—when he drew near—

Ingrid
Why do you falter?—Sure 'tis naught to us.

Muireall
Mother, when he drew near he found a maid
All white and gold and red (but red with blood)
And when he questioned her she answered him,

But in a strange sweet tongue he did not know,
Nor ever heard the like of. So he bound
Her wounded shoulder up and brought her home.

Ingrid clasps her hands to her side.

Mother, what is it ails you?

Ingrid

But the pang
Of an old hurt was done me long ago.
Tell out the tale.

Muireall

Why then, because he thought
Of all the maids 'twas she was loveliest,
He took her for his wife.

Ingrid

Sure, he was brave!

Muireall

Through many days they only talked in signs,
Till presently she came to know his tongue,
Little by little and to speak it too,
In such a sweet voice, like a flute, or bird,—

Ingrid

Why do you stop?

Muireall

O Mothereen, to me
Your voice is sweet, the sweetest thing I know,
But Biddy Kean, she said,—'twas like a bird's.

Ingrid (laughing and drawing her to her)

Come, little wise one, here 'neath mother's wing;
Now tell the story out.

Muireall

The days were years,
And still they dwelt together and were glad

When little children came. But one black day
Food was not plenty, and the man went out
Into the woods a-hunting with his gun;
And when he came at dusk to his own door
He smiled to think how wife and weans should
feast
On what he brought them. Down he threw his
load
Which the dogs sniffed at,—two fine white wild
swans!

Ingrid, clutching at her breast
Ah, that old pain again!

Muireall, absorbed in the tale
The wife stood up,
And not a word spoke she, but called her weans,
And these came running. Then she hugged them
close,
And slowly, slowly drew them to the door,—
The while her man stood still and gaped at them.
And then she gave a cry, a dreadful cry,
Such, Granny Murphy says, as women give
Whose hearts are breaking,—that I know not of;
Then out into the night with all her weans
Went she. And he, her goodman, waking up
From the strange spell had held him, followed her
By scarce a minute's space,—but 'twas too late,
For all he saw in all the wide dim sky
Was four white swans were winging to the sea.

Ingrid
Such tales as these are not for little ears;
Too true they are, and false,—yea, both at once.
When you are older you will understand
(God save you from the knowing!), how it is
A man may love and love and hurt you so
To drive you from him . . . Now 'tis time
to sleep.

Eilie, in a sleepy murmur

Dear mammy, take us with you when you fly!

Ingrid:

Be sure, dear heart, I will not leave you here.

She puts them to bed, singing:

The wind is calling, calling; the birds sleep in the nest:

For little birds and babies, the mother-wing is best;

But what of bird or mother that knows not any rest!

The wind is calling, calling; it rocks the babe to sleep:

The winter dusk is falling, but we that wake to weep,

What hope shall cheer or lighten the vigil we must keep!

Conon enters. Conon:

Well, lass, still crooning, crooning! You will wake

The night-birds with that long-drawn eerie cry.
I wonder, now, the babes can sleep to it.

Ingrid

Conon,—time was—you loved my singing voice.

Conon

Time was I loved the milk my mother gave.

Ingrid

You mean—you mean—?

Conon

Why nothing, lass, at all;
A man grows weary of these questionings.

Ingrid, slowly:

A man grows weary,—'tis a true word that!

Conon, in sudden fury:

And if I do, who is't shall say me nay?

I doubt you've heard the news that comes from
far

Of women talking in the market-place;

Of women fain to do the governing;

Of women claiming equal rights with men!

Ingrid

Of women spreading wings to reach the heights!

Conon, giving her a look of mingled fear and anger:

Ay, *wings*, a true word that, if folk say sooth.

(Suddenly deciding to assert himself)

Mind this, my lass, I'll stand no folly here.

You lost your wings if wings you had indeed,

When you became my wife. In that far land

Across the water whence you say you came

(Whose speech still clings upon your tongue at
whiles),

They give their womankind a deal too much;—

They've made them now the equals of their men!

Not so it was when, in the ancient days,

Those wild and hardy rovers of the sea

Fought with the Gael for foothold in the land;

But now their eyes grow dim, their prowess wanes,

And they grow childish, nearing to their end.

But here's enough of words, a woman's war

Of breath, not blows; yet blows may come at need,

When words shall fail me. Look you to it, so.

*He goes out. Ingrid stands quite still a moment;
then:*

It is the end. I come from a free clime

Freeborn of freemen. Little ones, awake!

You open on me frightened eyes of blue,
So like, so like to his. And his you are,
A part of him that I must bear away,
A thorn of love forever in my flesh
To mind me of these days that now are done.
Wake, little blue-eyes!—we are bound tonight
For a far land.

Eilie

Oh, mammy, shall we fly?

Ingrid

Yes, in a great white ship with wide-spread wings.

Muireall

Shall we have plumage?

Ingrid, taking cloaks from a chest:

Yes, to keep us warm.

Muireall

And spells?—And magic?

Ingrid, holding up a purse:

To make smooth the way.

Eilie, suddenly

Dadäeen?

Ingrid

He'll take comfort, never fear.

She lifts the boy from his crib, draws them all to the door, and then slowly out into the night.

MARSYAS

To hear Apollo play upon his lyre,
To struggle bravely, and, not least, to know
It was a god that caused our overthrow,
To feel within us the immortal fire,—
What more, in truth, might earth-born bard
desire?—

What more has life, the niggard, to bestow?—
What fate diviner waits us here below
Than this—to live, to strive, and to expire?

Thrice happy Marsyas! In the cruel death
The god, ungenerous in his triumph, gave,
Didst thou not smile within thy heart to know
That since he stilled thy music-laden breath,
And hid thy gold-voiced flute within the grave,
Apollo knew thee for no paltry foe?

THE SINGER

God shaped my lips for making song,
Fashioned my heart to harbor pain,
And set life's music, clear and strong,
To beat upon my brain;

Gave me my birth of that strange race
Wherefrom His ancient prophets sprung,
And in my accents hid a trace
As of an elder tongue;

Taught me to touch the chord aright
That stirs the fountainhead of tears,
And set the seal upon my sight
Wherewith He brands His seers.

A braver lot shall scarce befall,
Nor yet more cruel, nor yet more fair;
All joy to feel, to suffer all
Pangs whereto man is heir.

To have no lot apart from this,
No happiness, no love, no wrong,
But soul and body shaped as His
Stringed instrument of song.

HAPPINESS

I did not dream, I could not know,
That life contained such bliss,
That from a tiny germ might grow
Such happiness as this.

At last I read the lesson taught
In Joy's mysterious eyes,
As in some sweet wild creature's caught
And brought me as a prize.

And this is life!—that irksome gift
I longed to put away,
This headlong force that, strong and swift,
Throbs in my veins to-day.

My quickened ear harks to a speech
Of subtle whisperings;
My heightened consciousness can reach
The hidden source of things.

There is a host of secret signs
And symphonies half-sung,
As if I read between the lines
In some forgotten tongue.

And through it all a meaning runs,
I surely used to know;
I must have lived and felt it once
Long centuries ago.

A new sweet meaning lurks between
The pulsing waves of light. . . .
Dear God, till now I have not seen
Thy lovely world aright.

ART CREED

Paint me not the blue expanse
Of the old unquiet sea;
Paint the human countenance,
With its Sphinx-like mystery;
Paint the baffling human glance,
Veiled, elusive, though it be.

In strong rugged charcoal sketch,
Not the summer's luke-warm mood,
Not the clover-dappled stretch,
Nor the sweet pine-pungent wood;
Paint the aspect of the wretch
Doomed to peopled solitude.

Let thy nervèd hand translate,
Through unerring sympathy,
All the mocks and scoffs of fate
That the sun lays bare to thee;
Tragedies of souls that wait
The immutable decree.

With strong pitying fingers trace,
Tutored by thy human heart,
Passions of the human race,
Moulded to gigantic art;
Poems of the human face,
Soiled and sodden by the mart.

Down-trod, vanquished, though they be,
All divested of romance,
Search thou closely, thou shalt see
Clearer than the rest, perchance;
In the deeps of misery
Read the eloquent mute glance.

Thou shalt see in recompense,
 'Neath the outer semblance rude,
With a finer, subtler sense,
 The high spirit, unsubdued;
See beneath each vain pretense
 The divine similitude.

There shall rise to bless thy work,
 Clear as writing on a scroll,
Where the densest shadows lurk,
 Flashes of the human soul;
There shall gleam from squalid mirk
 The pale martyr's aureole.

Poet, Painter, quit thy dream
 Of a sylvan life apart
From the world's compelling stream,
 Where men chaffer in the mart;
Humbly human be thy theme,
 Grandly human be thy art.

CREATION

He looked and saw that it was good,—
The image that his hand had wrought,
The soul that quickened at his thought;—
And knew the great beatitude.

THE CHOICE

Before my soul had yet endured the pangs of human life, God showed me the earth.

And I beheld a marvellous fair country, wherein were streams and trees and edifices, the last being the work of the hands of man.

I said: This world is very fair; I fear not to be born therein.

God said unto me: Look thou closer.

And behold, when I had looked more closely, I saw that there ran hither and thither over the face of this fair earth, a mighty throng of creatures that never rested, but strove unceasingly each to destroy the others. Only a few were quiet, and these were speedily overcome.

I asked: What race is this?

God said: This is man.

I asked: What doth he unto his brother?

God said: He preyeth upon him. Behold, I have shown thee this that thou mayst choose. I send thee into this world that thou seest; wilt thou be of them that destroy, or wilt thou be the prey?

I answered: I will be the prey.

Pity me not, my brothers, that I am destitute of the good things of the earth, for I have chosen.

FAILURE

We met them on the common way;
They passed and gave no sign,—
The heroes who had lost the day,
The failures, half divine.

Ranged in a quiet place we see
Their mighty ranks contain
Figures too great for victory,
Hearts too unspoiled for gain.

Here are earth's splendid failures come
From glorious foughten fields;
Some bear the wounds of combat, some
Are prone upon their shields.

To us that still do battle here,
If we in aught prevail,
Grant, God, a triumph not too dear,
Or strength like theirs to fail.

IT HATH BEEN ALREADY OF OLD TIME

Ecclesiastes 1, 10.

Oh strange and very beautiful was love,
New found and radiant, yet was I aware
Of an unspoken meaning, vague as air,
That dimly with the wonder interwove;
So that in vain my groping senses strove
To fix the fleeting picture,—when and where?
Then Love: “That distant life we twain did
share,
Hast thou brought hence no memories thereof?”

Half hid and half suggested, Love and Fear
And Pain still meet me with familiar ways,
And delicate meanings spoke beneath the
breath.
Shall not these hinted messages grow clear
In that divulgent hour when my gaze
Shall meet the unforgotten eyes of Death?

ONE BY ONE THE SOULS FARED FORTH

One by one the souls fared forth,
Doomed to earth amain;
Some were fresh from the Master's mould;
Some were old as the stars are old,
Flesh-entombed again.

Some, remembering (though most forgot,—
Life and Time are wide),
Strove to fashion the dream; and some,—
They the wisest of all,—were dumb.
“These blaspheme,” we cried, “or rave;”
Hemlock, faggot, and knife, we gave.
One, but One, in pity and ruth,
Spoke out clearly love's utmost truth,
But Him we crucified!

PAIN

"I will not let thee go except
Thou bless me." So throughout the night,—
Like Jacob in the tale of yore
On the Judean mountain-height,
While all about his people slept,
Unheeding,—have I striven with One
Until the first faint streak of day;
Transmuting, as the steadfast may,
A curse into a benison;—
Yet halt and changed go evermore.

CIRCUMSTANCE

To one that trod a lonely road apart,
There came the summons: "Forth, and seek
the light!
Behold thy vista opens clear and bright;
Good cheer be thine, firm hand, and stalwart
heart."

Ah, God, what if it chance to such an one
That being long unused unto the day,
He falter, overborne upon the way,
What if he stumble, dazzled by the sun?

A MADMAN

He wanders lonely in a world of men,
An alien presence dedicate to dreams.
Forever to his sense the things that *seems*
Is sovereign to what *is*; the *now* with *then*
Is wonderfully merged unto his ken;
With nebulous conceits his fancy teems,
Peopling afresh the forests and the streams
With many an old-world light-foot denizen.

Mad, do you call him?—Yea, it may be so,
For madness knows no law of time or place
Or circumstance; yet truly who shall say
In this mad world which substance is, which show?
Fresh marvels come to bridge our little space,
And we have called them mad that led the
way!

DUALITY

Is it indeed my own, and do I reign,
I, only I, of all my kindred race,
Absolute lord of this one pleasure-place?—
This that was erstwhile, too, a place of pain.
Is there no other that may wrest amain
The power from me for a little space,
Speak with my voice, yea, wear my form and
face,
Then lightly yield all up to me again?

I know not, yet have I been half aware
Of one that sometimes claims for good or ill,
This habitable form men know for *me*;
Shows strange emotions that I may not share,
Haply enthralls my thought, usurps my will,
With whom I vainly strive for mastery.

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

For many days I pursued a beautiful flying figure. And when I had come up with it, I beheld its face, that it was very fair, and it smiled into my eyes.

I put out my hand and drew it close, whispering: Sweet, who art thou?

It said: Men call me Pleasure, but for thee I bear another name.

I asked: Sweet, wilt thou not tell me the name that thou bearest for me alone?

And it answered: For thee I am Sin.

I looked longingly into the smiling eyes; nevertheless I loosed my hand, and turned away.

There came now across my path, another shape of wondrous aspect. I was long pursuing it, and when I had come up with it, behold, its face was very fair.

I questioned it: Sweet, who art thou?

It answered: Some call me Love, but to thee I bear another name. One in a thousand meets with me; then hold me fast, thou chosen one, for but once in a lifetime do I come.

So I abode with Love for many days before I dared to put the question that haunted me. But at last I said: Sweet, wilt thou not tell me what may be the name that thou bearest for me alone?

Then Love flashed a glance at me, and answered: For thee I am Sin.

So after one long steadfast look I dropped Love's hand and departed.

Now it befell that on a bitter day in a lonely place, a figure passed before me. It fled not away from me, but at my call came close. It wore, I thought, a quiet look, and in the cold gray setting of earth and sky, its face was very fair.

Who art thou? I questioned it.

And it answered: I am Death, but for thee, nay, for all that summon me, I bear another name.

I said: With thee I shall find Peace. Pleasure and Love, both are denied me; what is left me but Death?

And I drew near, and would have clasped It, but I bethought me of that other name, and I questioned concerning it.

Death said: For thee, and for all that summon me, I am Sin.

So once more I turned, and went my way, sorrowing.

Then it chanced, after many days, that there came one from behind me, silently, and plucked me by the sleeve.

I said: Who art thou, and what wouldst thou with me? Art thou, too, of the brood of Sin?

And I turned and beheld the figure, that it was of a hard and rugged aspect, but of a strength that was nigh to beauty.

It answered: Some call me Labor, and some call me by another name, but my message is the same unto all humanity.

So I abode with Labor many days, and I questioned not concerning that other name, for I had learned that it was Peace.

REALIZATION

As one born blind that late beholds the light,
Whose dazzled sense finds each familiar thing
Strange and awry, and to whose motions cling
Traces, even yet, of his remembered blight,
So I, emerging from a joyless night
Into this day of happiness, whose spring
Had birth in sorrow, needs must with me bring
Some note of sadness in new joy's despite.

I shall grow used to it, no doubt; as yet
I am too lately seared and scarred by pain.
Uncertainly, with timid groping hand
And tear-dimmed eyes that cannot quite forget,
I draw anear, turn, and approach again,
As one that vainly strives to understand.

OUTLIVED PAIN

In the long struggle to assuage my woe
 I searched the sleeping past; each little pain,
 Each childish trouble I endured again,
And as I watched the long procession go
Great wonder woke within my soul, for lo,
 Each one had been a grief of death full fain,
 Or so I had been wonted to complain,
And with my tears attest it to be so.

Whereat within my breast began to rise
 The hope, no sooner born than thrust away,
 That I through tears might learn to smile
 again;
And looking back with disillusioned eyes
 Upon my conquered sorrow, smiling, say,
 Almost incredulous: "This once was pain."

THE NEW INFERNO

I, too, have been through Hell, O Florentine!
Does not my face proclaim it to be so?
Bears it not still the impress of the woe,
The sin, the suffering, that my eyes have seen?
Could any walk with countenance serene
Who once the anguish of such sight should
know?—
Who through such paths in retrospect must go,
Is it not written in my altered mien?

The voice of humankind throughout the years
Robs feast and dance and carnival of mirth,
And dims for me the brightness of the day;
I catch in laughter the low sound of tears,
So that of me, as once of thee on earth,
“Lo, who hath been to Hell,” the people say.

WHAT OF THE NIGHT?

Watchman, what of the night?
The sun drops red on the hill,
And the dark draws near apace,
And the night-wind wreaks its will.
And I—I have run my race,
I have fought my latest fight;
Watchman, what of the night?

Watchman, what of the night?
Is it fraught with many a fear?
Is it silent and dark and cold?
Is there never a comrade near,
And never a hand to hold,
Nor promise at last of light?
Watchman, what of the night?

Watchman, what of the night?
I have fought and fallen and lost;
I have fought and striven and gained,
And which at the heavier cost?
But a whisper still remained
Of an unrevealed delight;
Watchman, what of the night?

Watchman, what of the night?
Nay, is there aught to tell?
Can it prove more strange than this?
If I wake, why it is well;
If I sleep, why well it is,
So there come no dreams to fright;—
Watchman, what of the night?

BEFORE THE MERCY SEAT

I dreamt I stood, a naked soul, before the throne of God.

And He questioned me, saying: What hast thou done with thy innocence, that fine white garment wherewith I clothed thee?

I answered in bitter shame: I have trod the paths and breathed the airs whereby is innocence slain; the mire of humanity is upon me.

God said: What hast thou done with thy courage, that stout shield wherewith I did provide thee?

I answered, utterly cast down: Alas, my shield is reft in twain, for it hath indeed been mercilessly battered.

God said: What hast thou done with thy reason, that keen sword wherewith I armed thee?

I answered, overwhelmed with shame: The miasmas of the slums breathed upon it, and the sight of misery blinded it, and the voice of unheeded wrong thundered upon it, so that I am clean bereft thereof.

God said: What hast thou done with thy love, that glory wherewith I crowned thee?

I answered: I have so squandered it upon thy creatures that I know not if the remnant be a fitting gift to lay at thy feet.

And I held out my empty hands.

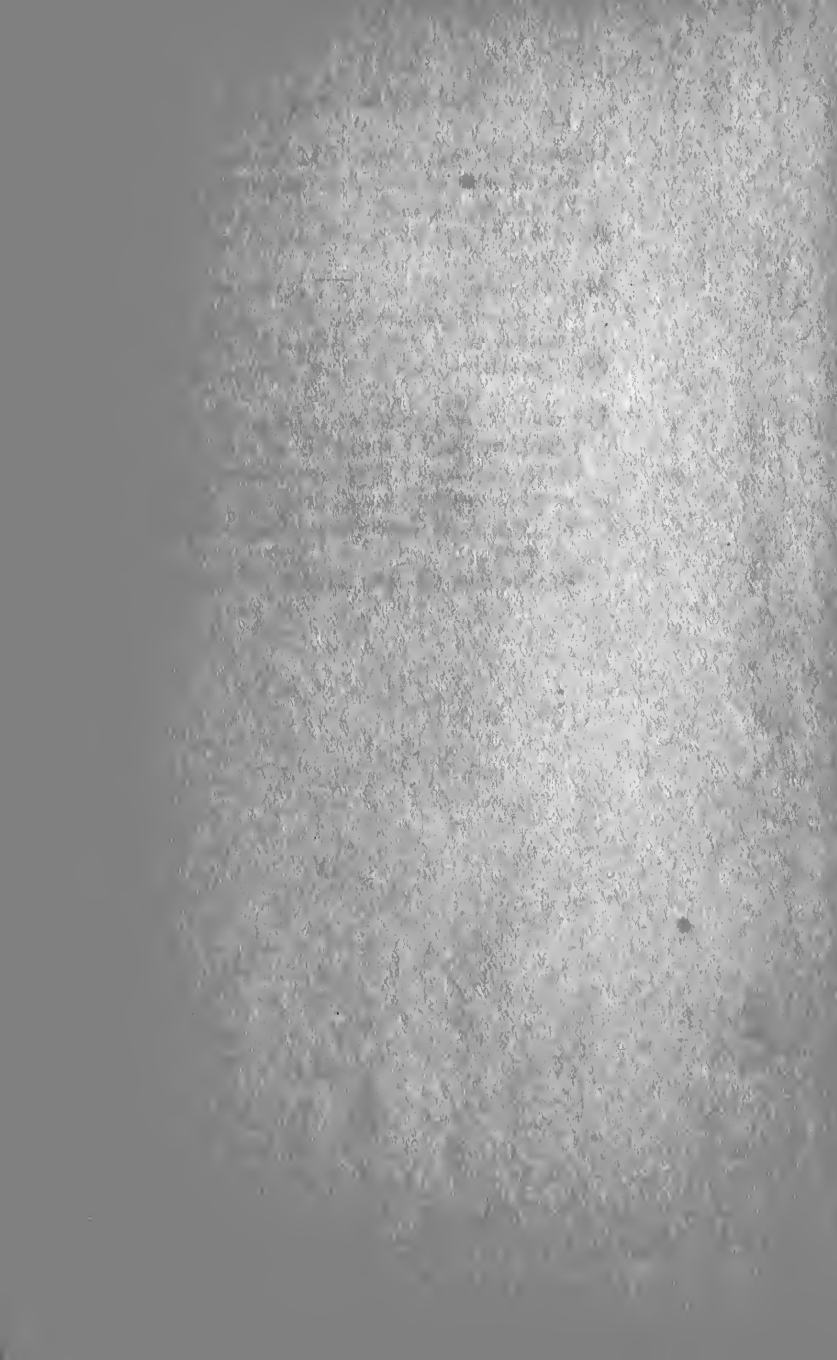
God said: What is that in thy hands that shines as fine gold?

And behold, it was human love.

TO MY SISTER ELLEN

Close is the tie of flesh that binds us twain,
But closer yet the soul-tie, for I see
The Lamp of Solace, burning steadily,
Raised by your hand, when through the wastes of
Pain
My way was set; and as I look again,
Lo, the old play-name now comes back to me,
Fraught with new readings of love's mystery,—
My "mother-sister," runs the old refrain.

Yet most I own the tie for tears we shed
Together; well I mind me of a day
When you and I and she who might not stay
Long mourning with us, wept our newly-dead. . .
Oh, joy and pain may fade throughout the
years,
But not the tie was forged of those shed tears!



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